

Congress of the United States
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August 8, 2018

Ronald D. Vitiello
Acting Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th St., SW
Washington, D.C. 20536

Acting Director Vitiello:

On July 20, 2018, a non-profit organization notified our office that several female detainees in your care were involved in a car accident in Texas. Subsequently, our office reached out to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Office of Congressional Relations (OCR) to obtain more information. An ICE employee responded in an email writing, "[a] van with eight detainees was hit (fender bender) in a parking lot while waiting for another transport vehicle. No injuries were reported, only damage was to the bumper of the van. There was no crash involving detainees."

Our office issued a follow-up question of where the accident occurred and if the detainees could be medically evaluated. The ICE employee responded saying "[t]he fender bender occurred at a parking lot in San Marcos, Texas. One detainee complained of pain and was evaluated by EMS at the scene. She was cleared and no other detainee requested medical attention. Once at the Facility the detainees were again medically evaluated by ICE Health Service Corps (IHSC) personnel."

An article published by the Texas Observer today, which includes a copy of the police report from the crash, reveals several discrepancies.¹ Contrary to what OCR described as a "fender bender," the police report shows the vehicle sustained disabling damage. Further, the detainees described the crash as strong and resulted in their discomfort, such as headaches and nausea. It is also unclear if health personnel evaluated the passengers after the crash. The article states only one woman saw a doctor for a leg injury, despite your staff saying that all the detainees were medically evaluated.

In light of this report, please respond to the following by August 10, 2018:

1. Please explain why ICE was not forthcoming about the incident when it occurred;

¹ <https://www.texasobserver.org/ice-crashed-a-van-full-of-separated-mothers-then-denied-it-ever-happened/>

2. Please explain the inconsistencies between the statements that OCR made to our office and the police report;
3. Please provide the records to show that these detainees were medically evaluated by IHSC; and
4. Please explain what recourse these women have for the injuries they may have sustained.

I remain very concerned about the Administration's "zero-tolerance" immigration policy and the subsequent reunification of migrant children who have been separated from their families. I am also extremely concerned with the treatment of immigrants while in government custody. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joaquin Castro". The signature is stylized, with the first name "Joaquin" written in a cursive-like script and the last name "Castro" in a more straightforward, blocky style.

Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress